



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

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Remarks by Council President Tom Perez on the Release of the OLO Report on Clarksburg Town Center

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"We are here today to receive the independent fact-finding review of the Office of Legislative Oversight concerning what has happened at Clarksburg Town Center. We are now entering the next phase in the process of restoring public confidence

"When we gave OLO this task last July, the purpose was clear and the stakes were high.

"At stake is nothing less than the credibility of and confidence in our county government's processes for regulating development. There were significant problems in Clarksburg, and we must find out what went wrong and why, and come up with comprehensive solutions to the problems. We must also look beyond Clarksburg to the development review process throughout the county.

"We didn't get into this problem overnight. It was many years in the making. But we are – all of us – accountable, whether we serve in the executive or the legislative branch.

"And the private sector developers bear responsibility as well. Just as we will continue to take a critical look at our own processes, the development community must also take a long look at itself in the mirror and identify needed reforms.

"All are accountable for their part – be they sins of commission or omission.

"And what we must not forget is that this situation – the violations in Clarksburg – were only uncovered due to an extraordinary effort by a remarkable group of Clarksburg residents. We thank you for your service – and apologize for our collective failure to be more responsive.

"I believe we must move beyond prescriptions to action. Much has been done since July. Much remains.

(more...)

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“Today we will hear from the Office of Legislative Oversight, but I want to provide a roadmap of where we go from here – and who will be assisting us in implementing the necessary reforms to restore public confidence.

“The buck stops here at the County Council. We will take the lead in the oversight of the needed reforms and I am very excited about the team of experts that we’ve assembled to advise us.

“The Council has asked Royce Hanson, who chaired the Montgomery Planning Board from 1972 to 1981, to advise the Council on immediate actions to strengthen our oversight of the development process and to help us implement the OLO recommendations you’ll hear about in a moment.

“Mr. Hanson is a highly respected land use and public management expert who currently serves as director and research professor at the Institute of Public Policy at George Washington University. He knows the lay of the land. He has the expertise. And he has agreed to advise us without pay, starting immediately.

“In addition, the Park & Planning Commission has hired a respected consulting firm in development review, Management Partners, to work with them in implementing the needed changes in record-keeping, procedures, and protocols necessary to tighten up that ship of state. That effort, obviously, is something we will be watch very, very closely.

“I’m also pleased to announce that Robert Kendal, who headed up the County’s Office of Management & Budget for 15 years until his retirement three years ago, has agreed to come out of retirement to work intensively at Park & Planning over the next 6 to 8 months – again, to help Chairman Berlage, the commissioners, and the staff restore confidence and credibility to Park & Planning’s development approval process.

“The Council will be holding a special public hearing on November 29 to solicit comments from County residents about the development review process. We want and need to hear the public’s voice on these critical issues. I envision that legislative remedies recommended by OLO in the report will be introduced in the Council by the end of November, with a public hearing on all legislative proposals to follow in January.”

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